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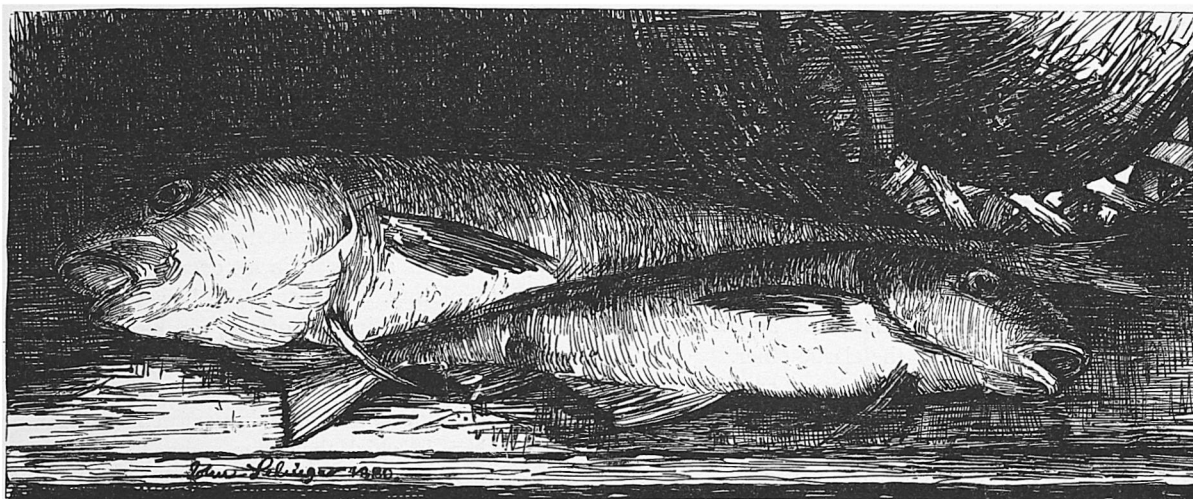
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STUDY OF FISH. — BY JOHN SELINGER. — FROM A SKETCH BY THE ARTIST.

THE EXHIBITIONS.

VII. — BOSTON ART CLUB.

TWENTY-SECOND EXHIBITION.

(OPENED APRIL 16. CLOSED MAY 8.)



HAT the pictorial displays of the Boston Art Club lack in weight and scope, it is apparently sought to make up in frequency ; but the wisdom of such a policy is more than doubtful. When an institution like the National Academy of Design, having at command the resources of a great metropolis, and taxing the best energies of painters and sculptors in several cities, finds one annual exhibition enough to attempt, and even then is forced to admit much of inferior quality, it is obvious that an organization not purely artistic, and one that appears to have difficulty in enlisting the full co-operation of local artists, should not burden itself with two exhibitions in a season. The contemplated removal of this

Club to a building of its own will furnish a suitable occasion for adopting a new plan in this respect, which we may hope will be improved. Meanwhile, it must be recorded here that the recent Spring Exhibition suffered from the usual thinness and want of forcible purpose which have come to be, in the long run, associated with the Art Club collections, — a general fact under which, of course, some meritorious exceptions must always be discriminated.

Out of a little more than two hundred contributions in oils, water-color, black-and-white, and sculpture, less than fifty attracted special notice on a first careful examination ; and of these some owed their prominence to size or badness, while others took the eye at once by some trait of excellence. Mr. W. H. Lippincott's two specimens of child portraiture, for instance, although bearing the signature of a young man of ability and indicating ample facility in technical processes, betrayed, in their crude conjunction of colors and their stiff poses, — an abundance of pink and blue socks in one, and a harsh plaid sash in another, — the bad influence of unripe patronage. The *Portrait Group*, of large size, thus became the source of a somewhat pathetic interest. A much more enjoyable and satisfactory representation of childhood, from the point of view both of art and sentiment, was found readily in the *Sienese Girl* of Mr. Ernest Longfellow, — a quiet and careful piece of work, well repaying the eye with its warm brown tints, its sunburned face under the broad straw hat, and its plain rendering of what is sometimes termed the "cunning" phase. The flesh in this picture is elaborated after a method strongly recalling Couture by its deliberate flat tints. The objection to it is that it applies to faces a mechanical texture too closely approaching that of less sensitive surfaces. The human tegument should be treated with more complexity and flexibility. Of portraits there were few besides these, excepting two partly finished heads of Daniel Webster and Councillor Dunn, by Gilbert Stuart, loaned by Mr. Henry Parkman and Mr. J. M. Sears. The Webster has been exhibited before in Boston, and both are excellent reminders of the great painter's vigor in seizing character, and imparting a perennial freshness to his renderings of it. A portrait of a lady, less than life-size, in a black dress, and holding a rose, — the figure being relieved by a dusky citron background, — called attention to the name of its author, John W.

Dunsmore, who, if he can continue to advance from this very good beginning, may be expected to effect results of marked worth. Near it hung a picture of a youth in a damson coat, and with a cocked hat, leaning back and smoking, from the hand of William Claus, modestly entitled *Sketch*. It was a fairly good painting; and, indeed, all the figure pieces in the collection sustained themselves above the level of the poorer among the landscapes and still-life subjects, although Mr. Benoni Irwin's *Bulgarian Refugee* hardly justified itself against a suspicion of factitiousness. The same artist's *French Peasant sharpening his Scythe* greatly outstripped it in merit. Here one saw a man seated in the court of a farm-house, actively employed, and absorbed in his occupation, while the accessories were painted in with much force, and a fresh out-door coloring. Unfortunately, however, Mr. Irwin had placed in the upper corner what appeared to be a blue-plastered wall, instead of sky, for the expanse held none of the life and light of the elastic ether.

Before some of the remaining genre contributions are noted, Miss Cranch's twin portrait heads of a gentleman and lady (the artist's father and mother), on one canvas, should be mentioned for a certain persistent life-likeness, albeit the forms emerged rather roughly from the bituminous atmosphere in which they were plunged; and a word may also be given here to Miss Elizabeth Gardner's Scriptural group, *Ruth and Naomi*.¹ The latter is a strictly academical composition, in which the figures were extremely well drawn, and the conventional blue draperies properly managed. The pigments were employed with remarkable skill, and, in fine, the work was complete, but uninteresting, save as an exercise. In *technique* it followed Bouguereau, in sentiment it was traditional, — two things which would naturally stifle originality. Mrs. Frances C. Houston, whose representative in the last Exhibition was referred to somewhat unfavorably in these pages, did better this time, with her *Wild Rose*, a little female figure in antiquated dress, standing by a rose-bush, and herself answering to the title. This lady has by no means mastered the resources of *technique*, as Miss Gardner has done, but she retains the possibilities that belong to freshness. Mr. Gaugengigl, again, illustrates with his *Summer* — a laughing girl, not beautiful, but gaily dressed and beribboned, and drawing on her glove as if for a sortie of pleasure — how freshness may be united with an extreme sophistication as to execution, which borders on the finish of miniature painting.² Of the latter, by the way, a genuine example was afforded by Mr. Ozeroff's delicate portrait on ivory of Cardinal Manning, in the water-color room. Two of Mr. F. D. Millet's three pieces were genre, but were to some extent disappointing. The *Morning in Venice* was extremely delicate. The *Neapolitan Fisher-Boy* offered a good theme, but was cramped in posture, and had too much the air of setting out to please. The immaculate white shirt and red cap and clean coil of rope, it must be said, were neither probable nor harmonious. *Philosophy in Summer* was very much better, introducing the graceful episode of a lady sleeping in a hammock. This composition altogether was exceedingly agreeable, notwithstanding that the painter has failed to give a glow to his scene which it needed, by leaving the sunlight outside the summer-house, and rendering it in a dull yellow at that. Another Tréport subject from Edgar M. Ward, recalling the one at the previous Art Club show, fell short of a complete success, though manifesting the austere virtues of thoroughness: its contrasts of tone were unfortunate. It remains to mention Mr. J. W. Champney's *Second Childhood*, an interior of the kind that seeks an audience of limited cultivation, which Mr. Champney seems to have the faculty to keep distinct from his more picturesque productions; and two elaborately finished curiosities by Toerner, of the old Düsseldorf school, *The Nun* and *The Nun's Grave*, which correspond to the mock antique short ballad of sentiment in literature, and afforded a momentary diversion from the scrutiny of so many modern compositions. Traces of Mr. Vedder's recent sale in Boston appeared in three of his smaller pieces, *The Questioner of the Sphinx*, *Venetians on the Mainland*, and *Man lighting a Pipe*. The first was the only imaginative picture by an American in the gallery. The *Venetians*, if not perfect in drawing, still made a pleasant decorative effect, with its knot of genuine color; and the peasant lighting his pipe was as admirable a study of the real as one could demand, in its way, but suffered injury from a frame colored in similar tints. Without at all setting Mr. Vedder up as an unimpeachable model, it is fair to notice how his work pitched the scale according to which most of the other figure subjects present should be measured, because it surpassed them in sincerity and certainty, as well as in dexterous management. The preceding remark should not be construed too sweepingly, and it will be prudent to specify that it is not meant to cover Walter Shirlaw's admirably wrought *Hide and Seek*, a plain woman made interesting by mastery of touch and a glowing twilight of umber and sienna tints; exemplifying, however, a source of inspiration and method of attack totally different from Mr. Vedder's. Mr. Shirlaw had another canvas near the line, namely, *Geese*, which gave a little of landscape, a little of birds, and the hint of a man, so that its classification might be difficult; but it is a broad, suggestive performance, worthy of his reputation, and perhaps the most spirited thing shown. Neither Vedder nor Shirlaw, however, is a colorist in the fullest and highest sense. Alfred Kappes, a young man who, it is understood, has reached his

¹ A photogravure from this picture appeared in *The Portfolio* for February, 1879.

² The etching which accompanies this notice shows the picture reversed, and the face is more youthful and attractive than in the original, in accordance with the intentions of the artist, who proposes to repaint the canvas in part. It will interest the reader to know that this plate is Mr. Gaugengigl's first attempt at etching, — a most remarkable success, certainly, which promises well for the future.

present considerable proficiency without foreign training, has possibly a little more of the inborn color quality; but it is not worth while to insist on this at any risk to the recognition due his *Study* in the water-color room, which depicted in rude, splashy, but effective fashion a half-nude man bending over and pulling strings from a shoe. The only fault to be found with it was, possibly, in the modelling of the back,—a difficult passage.

In the same room was hung a rather remarkable group of etchings by Peter Moran, A. F. Bellows, R. Swain Gifford, J. M. Falconer, and others, several of which were put so high as to be practically lost. Mrs. Anna Lea Merritt's *Ophelia* and *Sir Gilbert Scott* (the latter published in the April number of the REVIEW) fared better than the rest (excepting a carefully etched portrait of the late William M. Hunt, by Charles A. Walker), and a chance was thus given to observe some excellent work with the needle from the hand of this gifted woman. Concerning the ideal fitness of *Ophelia* there will, doubtless, be various opinions, but scarcely as to its high rank in point of *technique*.

We can take only a flying glance at the landscapes. Mr. Charles H. Miller's *New York, from Newtown Creek*, has been seen often before, and needs no extended comment. Somewhat eccentric in composition, so that it has to be looked at on one side, it is a large, masculine piece of work, with many good points of light and distance in it. Perhaps the first place should be awarded to Mr. Smillie's *Cloudy Day in New Jersey* for serenity in composition and coloring, good drawing, and a direct and simple way of delivering its messages, peculiarly desirable in landscape. At the same time, the repose which Mr. Smillie courts endangers occasionally the existence of depth and earnestness. Among the more noticeable and praiseworthy landscape offerings, the *Forest Road, Vermont*, of Mr. J. W. Mansfield, deserves an honorable place. The subject was well chosen, and in many respects well and attractively set forth, but the distribution of sunlight was faulty and inexplicable to such a degree as to disturb the whole effect. Mr. C. Philipp Weber sent in a seriously undertaken landscape from Grand Menan Island, and another, called *Spring-time near Munich*, which was perhaps a little cleverer, and was certainly "prettier," but too conventional in its arrangement, and less solid than the *Grand Menan*. Arthur Quartley was represented by a pallid *Low Tide*, with some well-drawn boats in the midst of well-graduated tones. The *Study of Trees* and *Path to the Beach* of C. F. Kimball contained exceedingly good points in the way of a strong seizure of the total effect, with a distinction of values and some degree of finish in details. Mr. Middleton's *Rainy Day in the Franconia Mountains*, although somewhat crude, was the most promising piece shown by the less well-known painters. Two marines by Lansil were included in the collection, of which the *Evening*—a view from Boston Harbor, taking in the State House, the whole touched with a misty pink of sunset—was new and picturesque, but not quite mellowed enough. Among the water-colors was an interesting impressionist glimpse of *Greze, near Fontainebleau*, by S. R. Burleigh,—a pale green field, edged by a line of jagged houses, tumbled blue and white sky, and a blue man and woman, all served up, as one may say, in the twinkling of an eye. Thomas Eakins had two of his singularly vivid and strongly American studies, one of baseball players, and the other a negro, whistling plover; and Mrs. Ernest Longfellow appeared for the first time on the catalogue, with two light and delicate color-sketches, showing both observation and feeling. Mr. D. R. Knight's French studies, full of detail, exhibiting a soft, velvety finish, and well carried out, except for some weakness in the skies, stood forward refreshingly from the usual quota of lilacs, chicory, nasturtiums, and other floral contributions by feminine exhibitors. A more pretentious effort was Mr. J. B. Hudson's *Homestead of Admiral Fate*, for the admission of which it is hard to find any reason.

Among the pieces sent by sculptors, the most important were Mr. D. C. French's portrait bust of Emerson, and a small model of *Law, Prosperity, and Power*, the latter imbued with a great deal of dignity, and abounding in strong and graceful lines; and an extremely spirited sketch in plaster, from life, by F. E. Elwell.

In this brief review nothing can be said of the *Zamacois*, the *Constable*, two forcible pastels by Regamy, and other foreign pictures, which added interest to the collection. Some of our best local painters were conspicuous by their absence; and it ought to be said that of the pieces shown by Boston painters there were very few that



STUDY FOR A STATUE OF LINCOLN.

BY T. H. BARTLETT.



THE SPINNER.

FROM A PAINTING BY T. W. DEWING. — DRAWN BY TH. FLEMING.

could be reproduced with advantage in a sketch. The *Study of Fish*, by John Selinger, which is suggested by the reproduction of the artist's vigorous pen-and-ink drawing at the head of this notice, was a superb piece of painting (leaving out the want of perspective in the slab on which the fish lay), but it is a characteristic representative of the ultra-realistic tendencies of the day, which, with a healthy disdain of conventionalities, deliberately ignore even the grace of line that may be had by the legitimate exercise of a very little judgment in the arrangement. If, however, arrangement and composition must lead to such glaring unnaturalness as in Mr. Rolfe's fish piece, *In a Fix*, the absence of it from Mr. Selinger's picture is a source of congratulation. Mr. E. L. Custer's *The Bossie* may also be instanced here as an example of good animal painting, which does not go beyond the study, and loses sight entirely of the fact that painting may be made the vehicle for the conveyance of ideas. It is in this last feature, indeed, that the weakness of the whole Exhibition betrays itself.

G. P. LATHROP.

VIII.—ST. BOTOLPH CLUB, BOSTON.

FIRST EXHIBITION.

(OPENED MAY 19. CLOSED MAY 29.)

THE first semi-public exhibition of paintings and statuary at the St. Botolph Club offered, on the other hand, the spectacle of a collection in which ideas, as expressed in design, held a larger share; and, moreover, a collection in which there was hardly a single canvas that was not entitled to consideration for some degree of technical merit or of originality. There resulted a corresponding elevation of the general atmosphere, which greatly enhanced the pleasure of spectators. The greater abundance of power gathered